

National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska

Public Hearings

Wainwright

1998

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NATIONAL PETROLEUM RESERVE - ALASKA

WAINWRIGHT
ANCHORAGE HEARING

Wainwright, Alaska

January 27, 1998, 7:30 p.m.

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (On record - 7:30 p.m.)

3 MR. RITCHIE: Thank you for having this meeting in the
4 village this evening. And thank you for coming and for the
5 opportunity for us to come and present this hearing and to hear
6 what you have to say about this Environmental Impact Statement
7 and plan. We're here to listen and to hear what you have to
8 say tonight and we appreciate it very much being here. We know
9 that this village is a little distance from the planning area
10 that we're talking about, but nonetheless, any of the things
11 that happen and are done in the National Petroleum Reserve will
12 affect the villages of the North Slope, so we're happy to be
13 here and to visit with you about that tonight. Nelson and
14 Arnold have asked me to introduce some of the people that are
15 here with us tonight so that you'll know who they are and can
16 visit with them after the meeting or the breaks sometimes.

17 Let me introduce, first of all, Anne Morkill, who's at
18 the table. Ann's our meeting coordinator for this and she's
19 been with us on all the meetings around the North Slope and
20 around the State. Mike Kunz is the -- my coordinator for the
21 National Petroleum Reserve in the northern district for BLM.
22 We always claim Arnold Brower, Jr., although, he's claimed a
23 little bit on the North Slope somewhat, sometimes. But we're
24 happy to have Arnold with us, he's the petroleum -- National
25 Petroleum coordinator and NPR-A coordinator for the North Slope

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1 Borough, and we're always glad to work with Arnold. And
2 whatever happens in this meeting or all the others, I've often
3 said it's Arnold's fault so he'll -- you can talk to him. He
4 doesn't like that recorded in the record, however, and he'll
5 take it out.

6 MR. BROWER: If you could express that to me, please.

7 MR. RITCHIE: We also -- came over with us tonight
8 Geoff Carolman, and if you know Geoff, he works for the state
9 of Alaska and the Department of Fish and Game. We're always
10 glad to interact with Geoff and have him here with us tonight.
11 Annalisa Delozier is here tonight as the court recorder or the
12 proceeding recorder and she'll take the notes that we'll record
13 tonight. We're glad to have her with us.

14 I'd like to introduce just briefly, to have him discuss
15 with you some of the alternatives, the things we're talking
16 about tonight. A little bit about the plan, some of the
17 language that's in this document. Dave Yokel, who's a wildlife
18 biologist and on the Arctic team and on the NPR-A planning
19 team. So Dave, if you'll.....

20 MR. YOKEL: Can you pick me up on tape if I stand back
21 here? Good evening, the Bureau of Land Management is
22 developing a plan for the management of 4.6 million acres in
23 the northeastern portion of NPR-A. The tan color on this map
24 is the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, as you know, NPR-A,
25 and this area outlined in red here with the Ikpiuk River on

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1 the west and Colville River on the east is the 4.6 million
2 acres that we're here to discuss tonight.

3 This plan includes the possibility of oil and gas lease
4 sales and the subsequent development that could occur. And
5 this plan is now in draft form. Now, any such plan that the
6 federal government produces is required to have a reasonable
7 range of alternatives. And we have developed five alternatives
8 in this plan that are depicted on these five posters here. And
9 these range from no oil and gas leasing anywhere in the
10 planning areas as depicted here by the green color all the way
11 to leasing the entire 4.6 million acres as depicted here in
12 yellow. And the intermediate three alternatives have varying
13 portions of the planning area that would be open to oil and gas
14 lease sales. So it means the green area would be closed, the
15 yellow area open.

16 All of the alternatives that would include oil and gas
17 lease sales also include language that would regulate oil
18 exploration and development to minimize the impacts on other
19 resources and activities in that planning area. The five
20 alternatives also include different land designations for
21 further protection for those resources. The final decision
22 that comes out of this plan could be any one of these five
23 alternatives or some combination of their features. So we are
24 here tonight to hear your comments on this draft plan. And
25 we're especially interested in comments on two areas. Number

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1 1, we'd like to hear what you think about these five
2 alternatives and number 2, we'd like to hear what you think
3 about our analysis of the impacts of these different
4 alternatives on the environment.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. RITCHIE: Before we proceed, let me just have the
7 -- tell the Mayor, Lydia how much we appreciate being here.
8 And turn some time over to you to get this meeting started and
9 then we can turn the time over to Nelson Ahvakana, who would be
10 the court -- this is not a court, but what do they call you?

11 MR. AHVAKANA: Me?

12 MR. RITCHIE: Now, listen, this is the Hearing Officer
13 and interpreter, and he'll take over from there. So thank you
14 for being here Lydia.

15 MAYOR AGNASAGGA: Thank you. I'd like to say, welcome
16 to Wainwright for this BLM hearing. I'm glad you included
17 Wainwright. And also I want to encourage the Wainwright people
18 if you have any kind of comments or concerns about this
19 hearing, don't be afraid to speak out. I encourage you to stay
20 for the meeting tonight because I think this is a final draft.

21 But first of all, the Inupiat way, we always open with
22 an invocation. So I ask our elder, to have a word of
23 invocation before we actually start the meeting. Okay,
24 everybody stand up.

25 (Invocation)

1 MAYOR AGNASAGGA: Thank you. Okay, I'll give the floor
2 back to whoever's in charge now.

3 MR. AHVAKANA: Thank you, Lydia. (Inupiaq).

4 MR. BROWER: (Inupiaq).

5 MR. AHVAKANA: (Inupiaq).

6 As you very well know my name is Nelson Ahvakana. I'm
7 the Hearing Officer for this hearing. And with me is the
8 reporter who is Annalisa, I'm sorry, I cannot pronounce your
9 last name. It's like my last name, too, I don't think you
10 could pronounce it either. So forgive me for not saying your
11 last name.

12 MR. RITCHIE: Delozier.

13 MR. AHVAKANA: Thank you. The purpose of the hearing
14 is to formally receive comments on the Bureau of Land
15 Management's Draft Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental
16 Impact Statement for the Northeast Portion of the National
17 Petroleum Reserve - Alaska and the ANILCA Section 810,
18 (Subsistence) Evaluation and Finding. This hearing is being
19 held pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, or
20 NEPA, and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act,
21 or ANILCA. It satisfies NEPA's requirement that BLM take
22 public comments on major federal actions and ANILCA's
23 requirement that we conduct hearings on possible actions which
24 may impact subsistence resources or activities

25 Your comments tonight will serve several purposes.

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1 Your comments on the ANILCA Section 810 subsistence evaluation
2 can tell us whether we have correctly identified and assessed
3 the effects of the various alternatives in the Draft EIS on
4 subsistence uses and needs and whether or not other lands are
5 available for the management schemes proposed and you can
6 suggest other alternatives which would reduce or eliminate
7 effects on public lands needed for subsistence purposes. You
8 can also tell us if the proposed findings in the Draft EIS are
9 accurate and whether we have left anything out of our
10 subsistence evaluation.

11 You can point out information about the resources or
12 uses of the planning area which our draft document may have
13 overlooked or not analyzed correctly; we want to be sure to
14 have all the relevant information before we make a decision.
15 Also, you can provide us a sense of what the public wants to
16 occur on these lands. The decision-makers want to know where
17 the public stands on these issues involved in the future
18 management of this part of NPR-A, Alaska.

19 The Draft EIS was placed on Internet on November 24th
20 and paper copies were released to the public the first week of
21 December. Several public information meetings were held in
22 Alaska during December to answer questions about the document
23 and to promote dissemination of the Draft EIS.

24 This hearing is one of the series being conducted in
25 the Alaskan communities of Anaktuvuk Pass, Atkasuk, Barrow,

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1 Nuiqsut, Wainwright, Anchorage and Fairbanks. Hearings in
2 Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, California are also being
3 held to ensure a full opportunity for the public to
4 participate.

5 In addition to these hearings, comments on the Draft
6 EIS have been accepted by the Bureau since December 12th, 1997,
7 the start of the official comment period and will continue to
8 be accepted if postmarked by March.....

9 MR. RITCHIE: March 12th.

10 MR. AHVAKANA:March 12th, 1998. Comments may be
11 provided orally at these hearings, or in writing via the
12 Internet, by facsimile or by regular mail. Informational
13 materials with phone numbers, and addresses, including the
14 Internet address, as well as blank forms for comments are
15 provided at the table right here where Anne is sitting at the
16 present time.

17 All comments provided will be compiled, analyzed and
18 considered by the Bureau of Land Management in preparing the
19 Final Environmental Impact Statement, due to be released in
20 late June 1998.

21 The way we will proceed is that those people who wish
22 to make an oral statement may do so coming here to the -- and
23 seated where the microphone is. And when you do that, you will
24 state your name, state which organization you represent, if
25 any, and then you give your comments. If you have written

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1 comments, then I will ask you to provide them to me so that if
2 they are in English, I could translate them in Inupiaq, so that
3 others may be able to understand also. We are here today to
4 listen to you. I request that the audience be considerate of
5 the speaker and give him or her the courtesy of your attention.

6 At this time we will begin the opening of the hearing
7 at this time.

8 (Inupiaq).

9 MR. BROWER: (Inupiaq).

10 I was just recapping previous -- the -- how other
11 villages and Nuiqsut Borough and Atqasuk and Anaktuvuk Pass
12 have generally said. I have not been at the public meetings
13 here before and I wasn't here the first time you folks came so
14 I'm not sure how many people are in full understanding of the
15 maps and designations and even the impact statement. Most of
16 these people may not already -- may have not seen it yet.

17 Hello, Craig.

18 MAYOR AGNASAGGA: My name is Lydia Agnasagga. I'm a
19 new city Mayor for Wainwright. (Inupiaq).

20 MR. AHVAKANA: Thank you, Madame Mayor. Lydia stated
21 that she encourages the Wainwrighters to make their comments
22 knowing for a fact that we have until 9:00 o'clock to take
23 comments.

24 She was at Barrow during the time when Barrow -- the
25 hearing was taking place and had listened to various elders

1 stating about the use and occupancy of that area for
2 subsistence lifestyle. And would also encourage and support
3 those people that live here within the NPR-A, Alaska to make
4 sure that what they're findings have been stated already be put
5 into consideration so that what the -- what is being supported
6 there may be supported in total.

7 Not only that, she supported the North Slope Borough
8 as well and the North Slope Borough has been established in
9 this area of the North Slope. And would also support that --
10 supporting also the various hunting sites that people have used
11 from ever since they could remember because it was passed on
12 from their families. The cabins and other areas that are
13 concerned, more or less, for the purpose of subsistence.

14 MS. CHILDRESS: Hello, my name is June Childress. I'm
15 from Wainwright and I'm representing the Tribal Council. I'm
16 not going to speak a lot on this, but we sympathize with the
17 wishes of people from Nuiqsut. And from what -- the documented
18 testimony that we have read, we are right now compiling a
19 written testimony through our traditional council and it will
20 be sent out to you before the deadline date, but we are working
21 on it now.

22 And after listening to what Arnold was saying we are
23 also going along with what ASRC is doing with the land
24 development there. And we would like to see that the Native
25 village of Nuiqsut be heard because that's their country. But

1 also in the same breath, even though that's their area, I thin
2 it would have an effect or impact on the whole coastline if
3 development is done without hearing what the Inupiat people and
4 the hunters in that area have to say.

5 That's all, thank you.

6 MR. RITCHIE: Thank you.

7 MR. BROWER: (Inupiaq).

8 MR. AHVAKANA: Mayor Rossman Peetook.

9 MAYOR PEETOOK: Good evening. My name is Rossman
10 Peetook from Wainwright. (Inupiaq).

11 MR. AHVAKANA: Mayor Rossman Peetook indicated that
12 that he would like to talk about the area that is being used
13 for NPR-A, Alaska EIS. That area is being used for subsistence
14 area uses and will probably be polluted if the industry takes
15 over the land. He's very concerned about that because he
16 wanted to use the example that the DEW line sites have been
17 left vacant. There's pollution there that's never been cleaned
18 up, and he feels that that same thing will probably be there if
19 the industry or the seismic people use that area for oil and
20 gas.

21 He is not against oil and gas leasing. But that he
22 feels that until such time that better technology is available
23 to be used in order to safeguard the area for fish and for the
24 caribou, for water fowl, these are very important to the
25 lifestyle of our people. He knows also that Teshekpuk Lake,

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1 there's all kinds of various fish there available. And what it
2 would -- what would happen if something drastic happened there,
3 and then the livelihood of the people that are dependent for
4 subsistence what -- what will happen to them.

5 He wanted to thank you for the opportunity that he had
6 to be able to make his comments and again, thank you to all.

7 Almost.

8 MR. BROWER: Almost. I think Rossman is concerned that
9 the process is going too fast.

10 MR. AHVAKANA: Oh, yeah.

11 MR. BROWER: That while there's oil available, that we
12 can proceed more cautiously and more -- with better protection
13 because of the great concerns about our renewable resources.

14 MAYOR PEETOOK: (Inupiaq).

15 MR. BROWER: And a general -- and supports the
16 positions of the Nuiqsut position.

17 (Inupiaq).

18 Just generally asking them to remember what -- how they
19 should proceed or a comment on their subsistence cabins that's
20 been brought into question by the Bureau of Land Management and
21 in this EIS.

22 MR. PHILLIPS: (Inupiaq) My name is Noah K. Phillips
23 from Wainwright. (Inupiaq).

24 MR. AHVAKANA: Thank you, Noah.

25 MR. BROWER: Noah Phillips says, growing up around

1 Teshekpuk Lake and he has been -- residing around Igolora (ph)
2 and has traveled and has been subsistence hunting around the --
3 probably from Pitt Point up, down to -- from there to Shakluk
4 (ph) and up south side of Teshekpuk Lake and the west side and
5 the east side, all around Teshekpuk Lake and travel with
6 (Inupiaq) 1940's, 1950's?

7 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Farther than that.

8 MR. BROWER: '30s.

9 MR. PHILLIP: 1935 maybe.

10 MR. BROWER: 1935?

11 MR. PHILLIP: Um-hum. (Affirmative)

12 MR. BROWER: With those -- at the time they were quite
13 young and with those families that lived out there. And has
14 traveled extensively in and around Teshekpuk and this is to
15 verify that this Teshekpuk Lake and the surroundings of
16 Teshekpuk Lake is an excellent subsistence hunting, fishing and
17 trapping area. It provides a lot of subsistence for Inupiat
18 livelihood and would not want to have any restrictions for
19 subsistence rights for the Inupiat people in that area.

20 He's very concerned about that and also is supporting
21 the community of Nuiqsut in their efforts to protect their
22 subsistence area and their community's desires to -- in
23 whatever comments they have submitted and support them in their
24 position. And his mainstay is one of the family residences
25 that established there in the Igolora (ph) area where, I think

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1 in the EIS I saw that I think four or five cabins had existed
2 in the area and he may be part of those -- the family that was
3 living there in the early days of -- at least before I was
4 born.

5 Thank you, Noah.

6 MR. TAGAROOK: The time is ticking. My name is Terry
7 Tagarook. I'm a resident of Wainwright. And I'm going to
8 speak in English since we have two people up there that will
9 interpret for the ones that don't understand what I say. But
10 most of you should know what I'm going to say.

11 I think the people that are affected most would be
12 Nuiqsut, and since we are on the west side of them it would be
13 pretty good if they opened it up because it won't affect us.
14 No, that's not true. The Inupiat, all people have always shown
15 respect, respect for each other. Respect for the land, the
16 water fowl, the game and the fish that we depend on. I think
17 that there should be some consideration in showing respect to
18 our land before any development is established.

19 One rule of thumb they always told us, respect the
20 animal, respect the land. And the people like the oil
21 companies did the same. I don't think I would disagree with
22 them either if they showed respect to the land and our water
23 fowl and our game in that area. What I -- a concern that came
24 to me is what affect will it have on the Western and Teshekpuk
25 herd, the caribou that we depend on, would the oil lease --

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1 what was going to happen. These are concerns that our people
2 are concerned about. But most of all, we like to show respect
3 to the people at Nuiqsut and back them up in their decisions in
4 the oil lease sale if it should happen.

5 And I hope you understand what I'm saying that you must
6 show respect to the people and the land they live on and that
7 is all I have to say.

8 (Inupiaq).

9 MR. AHVAKANA: (Inupiaq).

10 I need to let the people that don't know about
11 Mr. Tagarook, he's also an Inupiaq teacher here. So he could
12 speak in Inupiaq if he wanted to.

13 MS. ANGASHUK: My name is Marjorie Angashuk. And I
14 work for (indiscernible). So anyway, I want to ask you when I
15 was a little girl I used to live with my dad and everything was
16 -- everything was okay on the land. Before he died he used to
17 ask me to -- the land's going to change -- people nowadays, I
18 finally believe what he told me. But now it's changed so much,
19 I just don't know why. December I walked down the creek, I
20 find a dead animal, a walrus. When I take a little walk up
21 north and I find a dead animal, a bird. So everything's
22 changed around nowadays, so I really believe what my dad told
23 me when I was growing up.

24 Thank you.

25 MR. AHVAKANA: Thank you, Marjorie.

1 MR. BROWER: (Inupiaq).

2 MS. BODTISS: Are you done?

3 MR. BROWER: Yes.

4 MS. BODTISS: Because of the time you've given us to
5 look at your stuff -- I'm Alma Bodtiss, City of Wainwright.
6 Because of our time limit to talk on your recorder or whatever,
7 I think the City of Wainwright will fill one of your comments
8 and send it in. Thank you.

9 MR. W. AHVAKANA: My name is Winfred Ahvakana and I'm
10 here at Wainwright, resident of Wainwright. If I start talking
11 it will be about 9:30 so bear with me on this.

12 (Inupiaq).

13 Good night.

14 MR. AHVAKANA: That was Winfred Ahvakana. He
15 supported.....

16 MR. W. AHVAKANA: You're supposed to say, my brother.

17 MR. AHVAKANA:supported the village of Nuiqsut
18 for their subsistence use of that area. He, himself, had
19 hunted Teshekpuk Lake and all over in that area and within the
20 rivers there also. And there's various types of game available
21 in that area because it has never been touched by oil and gas.

22 In 1970, along with Edgar Toyana (ph), he went up river
23 on Colville and met the woods there at Nugaluk. And there were
24 doing subsistence hunting around that area. He supports that
25 area of subsistence hunting and would recommend here very

1 strongly that if -- the alternative two in the area of where i
2 has been marked on the Ikpiuk River and all the rivers there
3 that are marked green, that he would recommend that a larger
4 buffer zone be placed in those areas so that that area -- those
5 areas that are used for subsistence by the people of Nuiqsut
6 could be used for them.

7 I'm sure that the other areas like the lakes that are
8 used for harvesting fresh water fish would also be -- have a
9 buffer zone around those areas.

10 MR. W. AHVAKANA: I got one correct to make on your --
11 you don't speak much of my English, the Colville River.

12 (Laughter)

13 MR. AHVAKANA: It's Colville.

14 MR. W. AHVAKANA: The time when I went through the
15 Colville River, not to Nugaluk.

16 MR. AHVAKANA: I just mentioned the woods, camp at
17 Nugaluk where.....

18 MR. W. AHVAKANA: This was in the Colville River,
19 that's where I went and that's where I met those families.

20 MR. BROWER: Yeah.

21 MR. W. AHVAKANA: Not in Nugaluk.

22 MR. BROWER: You stand corrected.

23 MR. AHVAKANA: I stand corrected.

24 MR. W. AHVAKANA: When he said the Colville River.

25 MR. AHVAKANA: (Inupiaq).

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1 MAYOR PEETOOK: (Inupiaq).
2 MR. AHVAKANA: Thank you, Rossman.
3 MR. BROWER: Rossman is saying that NPR-A, if in the
4 event that it was open and we have no other recourse and for
5 designations of other lands for recreation or otherwise,
6 whether it be wilderness and scenic things, that designations
7 should be -- should come about. That he really supports the
8 position -- no designation position policy by the North Slope
9 Borough.
10 He's concerned that these will perhaps interfere with
11 subsistence hunting by people who are primarily there for
12 purposes of sports or recreation.
13 MR. AHVAKANA: (Inupiaq).
14 MS. BODTISS: How long does it take for her to get it
15 on paper so we -- we could get a copy of what is written?
16 MR. BROWER: One week?
17 COURT REPORTER: Um-hum, from tomorrow.
18 MR. BROWER: One week.
19 MS. BODTISS: One week. Could the city of Wainwright
20 have one?
21 MR. BROWER: No, they can have two.
22 MR. AHVAKANA: (Inupiaq)
23 MR. BROWER: Alma, what we can do is leave a stash of
24 those comment things over there in the city office so other
25 people can look at it and if they think about some things they

1 can submit their written comments directly to BLM.

2 MS. BODTISS: Yeah. Because it will affect us, too, no
3 matter where they drill. But we're backing up Nuiqsut now, but
4 they're the ones that live right -- right next door to it.

5 MS. MORKILL: We'll send copies of the transcripts from
6 all the community meetings so that you know what other
7 communities have said, too.

8 MS. BODTISS: Yeah, before March 12th. Thank you.

9 MR. AHVAKANA: Now, I'm going to turn the floor over to
10 Mr. Ritchie here so that he could have some closing statements.

11 MR. RITCHIE: The only thing I can say is I hate to
12 bring this meeting to a close because of airplanes. You know,
13 I think we've had a good meeting and I appreciate those who
14 have commented here tonight. And I hope you feel free to
15 continue those comments.

16 We hear your concerns and the folks in Nuiqsut who will
17 be impacted the most, perhaps, if it is leased. So we
18 appreciate tonight. We appreciate Arnold and Nelson being with
19 us tonight and all those who have helped. When we came over
20 tonight we didn't know that we had to leave this early. The
21 pilot -- we chartered out of Barrow and we're subject to the
22 bind that they get in -- the pilots get in can only stay awake
23 for 14 hours and then they have to go to sleep. We don't want
24 that to happen while we're in the air.

25 MS. BODTISS: No, then without the information you let

1 us comment.

2 MR. RITCHIE: So with that, again, we appreciate being
3 here and felt your warm reception and your comments. They are
4 valuable and they are important. And please feel free to make
5 comments until the 12th of March. And then you'll receive
6 notice on what the final things are going to say. So is there
7 anything else we need to do?

8 MS. MORKILL: We're going to leave -- there's an extra
9 copy of the EIS and we'll leave extra copies of these handouts,
10 too.

11 MR. RITCHIE: I'm sure you'll love to read that at
12 bedtime. Thank you again.

13 (Hearing recessed)

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